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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

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ON SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 1793.

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MDCXCIII.



A S E R M O N.

1st Book of Kings, chap. 8, ver. 44, 45.

“ If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the Lord towards the city which thou hast chosen, and the house that I have built for thy name: Then hear thou in Heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.”

THIS prayer of Solomon was offered up, together with many others, on one of the most august occurrences of any in the whole Jewish history—the Dedication of the Temple of Jerusalem: When the transcendent glory of God was so manifest, that the Priests themselves, from motives of veneration, trembling in the presence of the Deity, ceased to perform their offices, and for a while retired. Well might the multitude fall down on such a glorious vision, in prostrate

strate adoration. Well might Solomon exclaim, (8th chap. 1st b. of Kings, 27th ver.)

*“ Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold
“ the heaven, and heaven of heavens cannot
“ contain thee; how much less this house that I
“ have builded?”*

THE strain of zeal and piety in which these petitions were put up, was worthy of the Prince who offered, and the Almighty which was pleased to accept them. On consideration (9th ch. 1st b. of Kings, 4th v.) *“ That
“ he (Solomon) would walk before the Lord in
“ integrity and uprightness of heart, to do ac-
“ cording to all the Lord had commanded him,
“ keeping his statutes and his judgments.”*

THE contemplation of this sublime incident, leads me to propose the following propositions for your consideration. Namely:

1st. THAT God is the disposer of all events.

2d. THAT nothing is more pleasing to God than zeal, when directed by true piety.

3d. THAT

3d. THAT it is the indispenfible duty of a King to provide for the fecurity of his kingdom, and the happinefs of his fubjects.

THE first queftion for our confideration is, That God is the difpofer of all events: And indeed, how can it be otherwife? For, if we allow God to be the creator of all things, we muft confequently allow, that he is omnipotent. Again, it muft be granted, that he who hath power to create, hath alfo power to deftroy, *ad infinitum*. Now, feeing he hath power over the foul as well as the body, and and that he is omnifcient—for he who creates, muft know the end for which he creates, and the component parts of the created! therefore, the thoughts of our hearts muft be always before him; and how great foever may be our diffimulation towards man, it is not poffible to deceive God; he is able to detect and punifh, to permit, or to fruftrate, our moft fecret intentions. It appears, therefore, that whatever may be our views, they muft owe their *final* fuccefs to his approbation. I fay *final*, becaufe, mankind being incapable of diftinguifhing the purpofes of God, frequently judge
from

from local circumstances; but God, who beholds all things, as it were, at a glance, surveys the events of ages, with more certainty, than we do, those of an hour, or even a moment.

THEREFORE, the Almighty having *equally* the power to create and to destroy; and it appearing, that he hath made all things for his glory, it necessarily follows, that he is the disposer of all events.

WE come now to the second proposition, which is, that nothing is more pleasing to God, than zeal, when directed by true piety.

IF we take a view of the beginning of Solomon's reign, and consider the great attention he paid to his father's dying requests, his prayer to God for understanding, and his subsequent transactions, down to the completion of the Temple, &c. &c. I think the second proposition will be established. And indeed, the testimony of God himself bears witness to the truth of it; for he declares, (3d ch. 1st b. of Kings, 11th, 12th, 13th ver.) "*That be-*
"*cause*

“ cause Solomon had asked for understanding to
 “ discern judgment, and had not asked for long
 “ life nor riches, nor the life of his enemies, he
 “ had granted his request ; and in so great pro-
 “ portion, that no meer man ever was, nor
 “ ever should be, like unto him. That he ad-
 “ ded likewise, those things which were not re-
 “ quested, riches and honour, in greater abun-
 “ dance than to any other King upon earth.”

WE must observe, that although this pas-
 sed in a dream, yet the vision was of such a
 nature, and the circumstances so connected,
 as to leave no doubt of the presence of the
 Deity ; or that he had chosen this mode to
 make known his intentions, to put Solomon
 to the test ; and by this trial establish his
 virtue.

ON the other hand, we have an excellent
 example from Solomon ; for he no sooner
 finds himself possessed of the means, than his
 intent to employ them to his honour who
 gave them ; and that, not in a lukewarm un-
 interesting manner, but with that fervour, so
 expressive of a lively sense of God's great mer-
 cies,

cies, and pious remembrance of his Father's fixed intention, which he never lost sight of, but strained every nerve until it was completed. Here was a lively instance of pious zeal. It was this, the Almighty was pleased to express his acceptance of, by honouring the Temple with his immediate presence; and in a mode so wonderful, as to astonish all eyes, and overpower all hearts; awaking in them a sense of their unworthiness, and the necessity of looking up to him for blessings and protection. Solomon, struck with the sublimity of the scene, poured forth his soul in fervent prayers, which ascended up for a memorial before God.

THE third proposition now presents itself for our consideration, and is as follows, viz. That it is the indispensable duty of a King to provide for the security of his kingdom, and the happiness of his subjects.

THIS, I think, seems to carry conviction on the face of it, from the nature of the appointment; and although it must be allowed, Kings are of human institution, yet it is equally true
they

they are by Divine permission, and may be justly stiled, God's Vicegerents upon earth.

We read, in the 8th ch. 1st b. of Sam. 22d ver. *"That the Lord said to Samuel, hearken*

"unto their voice, and make them a King."

Again, in the 9th ch. 16th ver. he says,

"To-morrow, about this time, I will send thee a

"man, out of the land of Benjamin, and thou

"shalt anoint him Captain over my people Israel,

"that he may save my people out of the hand of

"the Philistines: for I have looked upon my

"people, because their cry is come unto me."

And again, in the 10th ch. 6th ver. Samuel

says to Saul, *"The Spirit of the Lord will*

come upon thee, and thou shalt prophecy with

them, and shalt be turned into another man."

From all of which, it is evident, the Lord did not only permit their request, but directed

their choice, and infused, likewise, a portion

of divine grace into the heart of his anointed;

insomuch, that he became a new man; *i. e.*

more just and pious. For, as the highest attri-

butes of God are Justice and Mercy, so also,

is the imitation of them the greatest perfec-

tion in men. By the first he governs the uni-

verse, and by the second he pardons the trans-

gressions

gressions of his creatures ; for he knows our infirmities. But it must be understood, there is a manifest difference between casual infirmities, which the best of men are subject to, and living in open violation of all laws, divine and human. These are crimes, the commission of which can be attributed to nothing short of *infidelity* ; and which subject their authors to the universal detestation of all men, who acknowledge the being of a *God*, and the force of *moral obligations*. Agreeable to the laws of God, human laws have been instituted ; and for the same purpose, *i. e.* the due subordination and harmony of all.

NEVERTHELESS, there is this distinction to be drawn between them, *the end of the law of God, is to make *good men*, by forming the inward principle ; but the end proposed by the law of nations, is to make *good subjects*, by correcting the outward excess, as to what relates to our temporal concerns.

THEREFORE, *justice* as it appertains to the Deity, having for its end the completion of
all

* Vide Taylor's Elements.

all moral duties, and the distribution of right to all men, without distinction, is *universal*. But when applied to human laws, it may be termed *particular* &c. because, it concerns our private contracts and transactions with each other. *Equity* also, may be said to be with man, what *mercy* is with God; for, equity takes off from the *rigour* of written law, by supplying a reasonable interpretation. And, *mercy* is that attribute of God, operating in the Deity, from the consideration of the creature's *inability* to do the will of the Creator. Therefore *justice*, as applied to human laws, is a constant inclination of rendering to every one their *right*. To secure this principle, and enforce the observance of *alterum ne lædas*, governments were formed, and *civil laws* established. Now, the *power* of law is to command, to forbid, to permit, or to punish; and this *power* must be lodged somewhere; and in whom so proper as the King, the Lord's anointed? To the end, 1st, That he may *correct* the offender. 2dly, That he may make some *amends* to the injured: And, 3dly, That he may display an *example* for the better conduct of others, to the glory of God, from

B

whom

whom he derives his authority. It was the love of justice which so eminently distinguished Solomon on this great occasion : When stretching forth his hands, he exclaimed, (8th ch. 1st b. of Kings, 23d ver.) “ *Lord*
 “ *God of Israel, no God is like thee, in heaven*
 “ *above, or on earth beneath, who keepest co-*
 “ *venant and mercy with thy servants, that*
 “ *walk before thee with all their hearts.*” And speaking of trespasses and oaths, he says, (8th ch. 1st b. of Kings, 31st and 32d ver.)
 “ *Hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy*
 “ *servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his*
 “ *way upon his head, and justifying the righte-*
 “ *ous, to give him according to his righteousness.*”

BUT all the subsequent passages show he forgot not mercy, nor any circumstance relative to his government or people, whether they were smitten before their enemies for their transgressions, or in drought, famine, pestilence, blasting, mildew, locusts, caterpillars, in cases of siege, or whatever plagues or sickness might betide them, nothing escaped his penetration ; neither their prayers, nor those of the stranger, nor their going forth to battle,
 nor

nor their sins, their captivity, their repentance, nor indeed any thing which appertained to their success or their happiness. It appears, therefore, that the only way to secure the blessings of God, either to ourselves or others, is by prayer, the love of justice, obedience to laws, fulfilling covenants, &c.

HAVING proved those propositions on which I set out, it now remains that I bring these truths home to our hearts, by applying them to our present *critical* situation.

WHEREFORE, laying aside all weak prepossessions and party prejudices, I conjure you to give that attention to what I am about to say, which the magnitude of the subject demands: for in it is involved the happiness or misery of a whole kingdom; a kingdom, whose consequence in the scale of Europe, hath been, and is, the admiration and envy of surrounding nations.

It is England, and Englishmen, of whom I am now speaking! Whose *sacred rights* are guaranteed under Divine Providence, by a government

vernment and *laws* the most wise and salutary; where *civil liberty* is enjoyed, by each individual in its utmost latitude, and religious opinions *indulged* even to a fault.

WHAT, therefore, my countrymen, have we to wish for? Revelling, as we do, in the plenitude of prosperity, our gratitude to God should know no bounds, for these his great and distinguished mercies! If we consider our King upon the Throne, is he not the pride of Englishmen, and a father to his people? In piety and zeal towards God, and solicitude for his subjects happiness, no way inferior even to Solomon himself.

I COULD point out, and plainly prove, many instances in which he hath been the peculiar care of Heaven; but these are so recent, that I leave every one to make their own comments. There is one, and indeed I should think myself unpardonable were I to omit taking note of it: it is his late escape from the machinations of our common enemy; and, I shudder while I speak it, perhaps from the concealed dagger of an execrable assassin! I
felicitate

felicitate him on this event ; and not only his Majesty, but all my fellow subjects, on their late escape from the perfidious intrigues of daring *infidelity and treason*. I praise God, that he in his great mercy hath been pleased so to dispose our hearts, that we have justly distinguished between *good and evil, order and anarchy*. Our second Solomon hath torn the mask from the face of sedition, and exposed it to public detestation. May every King possess such a Minister ; may every nation find such a friend, to direct its counsels and support its laws ; then, indeed, will *virtue* be triumphant, and *vice*, if possible, take refuge in that hell it merits.

CONTEMPLATING the foregoing circumstances, I am led to believe that the hand of the Lord is with us. If so, let us venerate the event ; let us remember, the cause we fight for is the cause of *God* against *infidelity* and *atheism* ; of *justice* against *injustice*, in its most extensive signification. In short, it is the cause of our *King*, our *Constitution*, our *country*, and of all *good* people, against our *natural* and implacable *enemy* ; by whom our forefathers

forefathers bled, and whose pride and presumption we have as frequently humbled.

WE used forbearance while forbearance was a virtue. We at first beheld them, as struggling against despotism for liberty; we must behold them now with horror, the children of sedition, the slaves of anarchy, trampling on all laws, divine and human; spreading their baneful and detested principles into the vitals of every country that is weak enough to receive them; subverting all order, plundering all property, and substituting instead of them, a hell upon earth.

SUCH is the situation of several parts of Europe at this present period; such are the circumstances to which I have called your most serious attention. And indeed, when we consider their crimes, we are astonished at the forbearance and long suffering of God! But attend—his judgment soon or late will surely overtake them; already the storm seems gathering round them; their *apostacy*, their *blasphemies*, their *rapine*, their *murders*, all cry aloud for vengeance. The arm of the Lord
is

is made bare, and woe be to those on whom it may fall !

To conclude, Although our indignation is called forth, let us, emulating the virtues of Solomon, in the midst of *justice* remember *mercy*. Let us not involve the innocent in the fate of the guilty ; perhaps there are yet many worthy persons amongst them, who claim our commiseration and our succour. This may explain why the just vengeance of God hath not already overwhelmed them. Therefore, “ if we go forth to battle,” let us beseech the Lord to grant us that success which the justice of our cause demands ; but above all, let us be cautious not to forfeit his protection, by adopting those vices we are about to combat.

Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

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which the justest and noblest demands; but
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precepts, and by following these vices we are
at last to conquer.



Now unto the King eternal, immortal, in-
visible, the only true God, be honour and
glory, Amen.